

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 MC-02 OMB-01 /099 W

-----061330Z 091524 /44

R 061050Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6808

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0018

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR, MI

SUBJECT: EX-SAHARA: UPDATE OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

REF:NOUAKCHOTT 3157

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL FRENCH AND SPANISH MILITARY ATTACHES, TWO SQUADRONS OF MOROCCAN REGULAR ARMY TROOPS, NUMBERING ROUGHLY 1,300, ARRIVED IN BIR MOGHREIN, MAURITANIA (2514N 1135W) BY COLUMN FROM EL AAIUN, WESTERN SAHARA (2710N 1312W) ON JAN. 2. MOROCCAN COLONEL COMMANDED COLUMN WHICH INCLUDED TANKS, ARMORED CARS AND ARTILLERY PIECES. FRENCH AND SPANISH ATTACHES STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THESE MOROCCAN SQUADRONS ARE TO BE PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED TO BIR MOGHREIN, AND THAT MOROCCANS WILL HERE-
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AFTER TAKE OVER BIR MOGHREIN AREA OF MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY FROM MAURITANIANS. (COMMENT: NEWLY-DEFINED AREAS OF MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY WILL RESULT IN MOROCCAN MILITARY CONTROL OF MAURITANIA NORTH OF BIR MOGHREIN INTO SAHARA, AND EASTWARD TO INCLUDE ENTIRE MAURITANIAN/ALGERIAN BORDER. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THIS IS FIRST STEP OF IMPLEMENTATION OF LONG-STANDING MOROCCAN PROPOSAL TO INTEGRATE

MOROCCAN/MAURITANIAN MILITARY COMMANDS.)

2. IN POSSIBLY RELATED INCIDENT, GIRM FORCES AND POLISARIO GUERRILLAS CLASHED THROUGHOUT DAY ON DEC 27 IN AREA EAST OF BIR MOGHREIN. FIGHTING BROKE OFF DURING NIGHT OF 27TH, AND NEXT MORNING MAURITANIANS DISPATCHED NEWLY-DELIVERED DEFENDER AIRCRAFT TO UNDERTAKE AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE IN EFFORT TO PINPOINT POLISARIO LOCATIONS. ACCORDING TO SPANISH ATTACHE, AIRCRAFT WAS DISABLED BY POLISARIO MACHINE GUN FIRE AS IT BEGAN FLYING AT LOW ALTITUDES FOR MORE DETAILED OBSERVATIONS. MACHINE GUN FIRE CAUSED RIGHT ENGINE TO CATCH ON FIRE, AND AIRCRAFT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTROL AND CRASHED INTO DESERT LEAVING 3 DEAD. FRENCH NATIONAL PILOT WHO FLIES COMBAT AND CARGO MISSIONS FOR GIRM AIR FORCE CONFIRMED (BUT ONLY INDIRECTLY TO US) THAT DEFENDER WAS SHOT DOWN. HE HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY ASSERTED PLANE WAS HIT BY "ROCKET", AND DECLARED POLISARIO DESTROYED MOROCCAN F-5 AND AT-6 IN "SAME ENGAGEMENT " WITH SAME WEAPON. (WE HAVE ALSO HEARD ACCOUNTS OF THIS INCIDENT AMONG CIVILIANS --MAURITANIAN AND EXPATRIATE-- WHICH ATTRIBUTE LOSS OF DEFENDER TO PILOT ERROR, SUGGESTING GIRM AMY BE ATTEMPTING TO "MANAGE" THIS UNHAPPY PIECE OF NEWS A BIT.)

3. FINALLY, USUALLY WELL-INFORMED LOCAL DIPLOMAT REPORTS THAT MILIAN PRESIDENT TRAORE AND MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH MET SECRETLY IN KIFFA (1637N 1124W) ON JAN 3. PURPOSE OF MEETING, ACCORDING TO DIPLOMAT, WAS TO PUT PRESIDENTIAL STAMP ON AGREEMENT REACHED DURING VISIT TO BAMAKO NOV 16 BY GIRM MININTERIOR WHICH CONFIDENTIAL

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AFFORDS GIRM FORCES RIGHT OF "HOT PURSUIT" OF POLISARIO GUERRILLAS ACROSS MALIAN/MAURITANIAN BORDER (SEE NOUAKCHOTT 2821 AND BAMAKO 4262).

4. COMMENT: WHILE MUCH OF ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION REPORTED HERE IS SPONGY, LIKE MOST SUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN NOUAKCHOTT, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT REPORT OF ARRIVAL OF LARGE MOROCCAN REGULAR CONTINGENT REDEFINITION OF GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY IS ACCURATE

HANDYSIDE

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